



July 21, 2009

Bipartisan homeless housing focus group gets back to work

Dear friends and neighbors,

I hope you're enjoying a pleasant summer so far. One of the big issues on which I'm working this interim is finding ways to house individuals who are considered high-risk for becoming homeless. These include people who've just been released from prison, people with



significant drug or alcohol problems and those suffering from mental illness. The data is very clear that homelessness leads to recidivism (committing new crimes), so by breaking down the barriers preventing these individuals from finding a stable place to live, they are less likely to reoffend.

Two years ago, as part of my continuing work on prison and supervision reform, Senator Debbie Regala (D-Tacoma) and I formed a work group to look at ways to protect the public by finding housing for high-risk individuals. Someone who is homeless is unstable and will likely commit new crimes. The state can save taxpayers money by lowering the number of individuals put back into prison, and that results in safer communities.

There are many federal, state, county, and even city programs dedicated to the homeless problem, but **the most challenging task for all of them is finding housing for these high-**

risk individuals. Our focus group has been working with everyone from the Rental Housing Association to Columbia Legal Services and the Homeless Alliance, and our first meeting of the summer is scheduled for July 29th.

One of the tools our group will be able to utilize comes from my bill to provide [housing vouchers for](#) felons who will be released from prison, which will take effect July 26th. These vouchers can be issued for up to three months per individual, which is enough time for a person to find gainful employment but not enough time to get comfortably dependent on the state. Last year, the state Department of Corrections held about 800 offenders past their earned early release date. At an average cost of around \$612 a week, it saves the state nearly \$15,000 per offender per year. The program is expected to save state taxpayers about five million dollars by preventing extended prison stays and reducing recidivism. I'll be sure to keep you updated throughout the interim as our focus group makes progress.

Bills signed into law begin to take effect

I've communicated with you before about the wrong priorities in the budget which was passed this session. That budget and the bills within it took effect July 1st, and we're already beginning to see why many of them weren't the right ideas.

I believe that public safety is the number one priority of the Legislature, however this budget cut funding for supervision of low- and moderate-risk offenders upon release from prison. Also, the length of supervision time for serious violent offenders was reduced by a year and violent offenders by a year and a half.

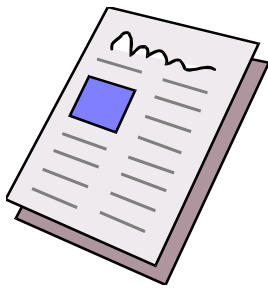


Even the federal government is concerned that due to the recessed economy, states will choose to find savings by making cuts in the area of corrections (which is exactly what our

state has done). I'm very concerned that the cuts made this year will lead to more crimes being committed and more individuals reoffending because they weren't being supervised.

My prison reform legislation reduced the state's expanding prison population and I'm afraid that cutting down on who is supervised and for how long will undo that. Then the state will be forced back into a position where it will need to start building more prisons again.

Watch for my newsletter



You may be receiving my newsletter in your mailbox very soon. In it, I go into detail about some of the legislation on which I worked during session, and also lay out the progress of my prison and reentry reform as it affects Pierce County. **There's also a survey which I'd like to invite you to fill out and mail back to me or include in an e-mail.**

If you don't receive my newsletter in the mail by the end of the month, you can always find it on my website, at www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Carrell.

In closing...

Thanks for being a part of my Kitchen Cabinet. If you know someone in our district who might be interested in participating as well, please feel free to forward this e-mail to him or her, and ask them to contact me using the information below so I can add them to my distribution list.

As always, if you'd like to contact me you can write, phone, e-mail, or stop by my Olympia office. I look forward to your comments and suggestions because they help me better represent you. My office phone number is (360) 786-7654, and my home phone number



is (253) 581-2859. Or you can write me at **102 Irv Newhouse Building, P.O. Box 40428, Olympia, WA 98504-0428.**

- Legislative E-mail address: carrell.mike@leg.wa.gov
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a small dot above the 'i'.

Mike Carrell

28th District State Senator